



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH HONORS FOUR INDIVIDUALS WITH FIRST ANNUAL “END OF FALL” AWARDS

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) in concert with the Fall Prevention Consortium and The Plaza at Moanalua will honor four individuals for their outstanding achievements and dedication to promoting fall prevention efforts in Hawaii. On Dec. 29, Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Michael Dowell of Stay At Home Modifications, Glenn Sakai of the Tai Chi for Health Institute (THCI), and Linda Mau, Public Health Nurse from the Island of Lanai, will each be honored with a special trophy and proclamation at the Plaza Club in Honolulu. A special perpetual award will also be presented by DOH and the Consortium to The Plaza at Moanalua, an assisted living facility in Honolulu.

Every hour of every day in Hawaii, a senior is transported by ambulance to an emergency room because of a fall injury. With more than 8,700 falls among our seniors per year, the toll in human suffering is staggering. More than \$120 million is spent in Hawaii each year on physician and hospital charges to care for senior fall injuries. Falls are a threat to the health of older adults and can significantly limit their ability to remain self-sufficient. The good news is that falls are preventable. Today, there are proven interventions that can reduce falls and help older adults live better and longer. The individuals and agency being honored this year are at the forefront of fall prevention in Hawaii.

“The holiday season reminds us of the importance of family, and fall injuries are particularly hard on families during the holidays, especially those with grandchildren whose grandparent is incapacitated by a fall injury.” said Dr. Linda Rosen, chief of the Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention branch of DOH. “The end of fall seems the most appropriate time to bring attention to this serious public health issue.”

The Plaza at Moanalua Administrator Shannon Miyazaki said, “The Plaza at Moanalua is pleased to help honor these selfless individuals that have dedicated so much of their lives to assist our kupuna in living safer and more independent lives.”

Beginning this year, during the “end of fall” season, the Consortium selects four individuals to honor for their statewide efforts to reduce the number and severity of senior falls and fall injuries.

The Honorees:

Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland is a 14-year Legislative veteran serving on behalf of her Liliha constituents. She worked for more than six years to pass legislation to assist in improving fall prevention efforts of the state. In 2014, she successfully drafted, monitored and worked tirelessly to pass the first legislation that created the Hawaii state fall prevention coordinator position within DOH. The new position works specifically to reducing fall injuries and the staggering toll of pain and suffering our seniors endure when injured in a fall.

Mike Dowell heads Stay At Home Modifications, a company specializing in home safety assessments and modifications that help reduce fall risks. He installs grab bars, safety lights, stair lifts, hand rails and other modifications. Dowell is being recognized for his outstanding work on the island of Lanai where he assessed, repaired and modified more than 40 senior homes to make them safe for their senior residents. "The seniors on Lanai adore him", said Lanai Public Health Nurse Linda Mau.

Glenn Sakai also known as "Wise Grasshopper" to his tai chi friends, is being honored for his many hours of volunteer time teaching tai chi to seniors to improve their balance and reduce their fall risk. It is his selfless and generous spirit that also earned Sakai a 2014 nomination for Hawaii State AARP Volunteer of the Year. He is recognized for his amazing kindness, compassion and willingness to go above and beyond to help the community.

Linda Mau is being recognized for her dedication and passion for helping prevent senior falls in her community. A public health nurse on Lanai, Mau traveled at her own expense to Maui to complete the training necessary to earn certified instructor status in Tai Chi. Tai Chi is the number one exercise program to help prevent senior falls as determined by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Council on Aging (NCOA). Mau is using her new skills to enhance the lives of her senior clients at the Lanai Senior Center and the Lanai Hospital.

The Plaza at Moanalua has consistently sponsored and supported fall prevention efforts. They host Tai Chi for Health Instructor Workshops for their fall prevention effectiveness, balance improvement and the overall wellness that results from the TCHI form of Tai Chi. DOH has created a special Fall Prevention Perpetual Trophy to honor the Plaza's dedication.

Information on statewide resources for fall prevention is available at www.nogethurt.hawaii.gov. Available resources include the Interactive Fall Prevention Guide; a GPS driven map of more than 120 services available in Hawaii including medication management, vision exams, exercise programs or home safety assessments. To add a resource to the listing, call the DOH Injury Prevention program at (808) 733-9202 to determine if your company fulfills the criteria for participation. Also available is a summary of the fall prevention campaign and a special video on preventing falls for seniors and their care-givers.